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PUBLIC MONUMENTS TO GREAT MEN.

By Charles C. Ingham.

ON taking a survey of the various constructions erected in honor of distinguished citizens, we cannot but be impressed with the evident want of any popular work on the philosophy of monuments, that should give some knowledge of the principles that ought to govern in that department of Art.

In the hope of eliciting the views of more competent persons, we will proceed to give a few of our own speculations on the subject.

We are aware that our opinions may appear heretical; but we feel assured, when we reflect that we are supported by the authority of the Egyptians, who, amongst nations, were the monument builders, the greatest that the world has seen or ever will see. The artists of this wonderful people believed that no means could so effectually bring to mind an absent object as a picture of that object: that nothing, save the actual presence of the man himself, could bring him so immediately to their thoughts, as an image of his person. For this reason all their testimonials of respect to the memory of great men were statues.

To enable us to arrive at sound conclusions, in treating of this subject, we may suppose that we have been visited by travellers from a country where (like our Quakers) the inhabitants have no memorials of the illustrious dead; and where, of course, men could not be biased by old impressions. Now, what would be the thoughts of such persons on viewing our mementoes; what could they learn from the pile on Bunker Hill (or the still greater one at Washington) of the intentions of the builders? Nothing. The meaning would have to be explained, for there is not anything in the form of these structures to indicate that they were intended to transmit to posterity the remembrance of a great battle or of a great man. Would not such people very naturally inquire "What relationship of ideas, or connecting link of thought, is there between a building, resembling a factory chimney and a great statesman? What is there to lead the mind from the one to the other? How can an architectural construction remind us of a man?"

A memorial should speak for itself, and tell us what it means, without the assistance of written characters; if they be employed, then no superstructure is necessary, all that is required is a tablet on a rock to hold the inscription. But an inscription is not a monument; a monument should be durable and beautiful, speaking a universal language that can be understood, alike by the civilized and the savage, the lettered and the unlettered, on viewing which, but one idea could arise in the minds of all men, and that thought should be, "This has been erected in honor of a great man." Perhaps the inefficiency of anything

not resembling the human form, to call up the idea of a man, may be made more evident by employing some object not heretofore used for such a purpose. Would we not laugh to see an article of household furniture, or a culinary utensil employed as a monument? Suppose a citizen, on the death of his father, were to go to market, and purchase a teapot, and setting it up in his house, inform his friends that he placed it there as a monument in honor of his revered parent. The absurdity of the thought could not but strike even the dullest imagination. Let us place the matter in a reverse point of view, and see how it will appear. If an architectural structure can call up the remembrance of a particular man, why should not the figure of a man recall the idea of a particular building? If an inhabitant of this city were to visit Rome, and having returned home, should purchase a statuette of a naked American savage, and placing it in his drawing-room, should tell his guests that he erected it as a memorial to recall the emotions of admiration, wonder and awe he had felt on first entering the Church of St. Peter's, would not his friends be inclined to think him crazy? Nevertheless it were no more unreasonable to represent a building by the form of a man, than it is to commemorate a man by an architectural structure, or a teapot. We tolerate the one absurdity, because we are used to it, while we are fully alive to all that is laughable in the other. These imaginary cases of the teapot, and the statuette, extravagant as they may seem, will, on examination, be found to be much more reasonable than the architectural monuments we have mentioned, because the former were supposed to be remembrances to their owners alone, who might always keep in mind the intentions with which they had set up such strange mementoes, while the latter are addressed to unborn generations, through all time, who may not even understand our language, nor have any of our conventional associations on the subject.

An inquiry into the origin of the misapplication of architectural structures to monumental purposes, may not be without use, in showing us where the supposed precedents are to be found, for they are all thought to have had precedents. Of the principal styles of monuments that appear to commend themselves to our modern bad taste, we shall enumerate a few. 1st. The obelisk. 2d. The Gothic steeple. 3d. The circular temple. 4th. The column with a statue hoisted aloft in the air on its top. And last, although not an architectural form—a horse with a man on it.

The obelisk, or factory-chimney style, has been very popular; it is an imitation of the Egyptian obelisk. Obelisks were placed in pairs, at the gates of temples, or before a great statue, and on them were engraved (in hieroglyphics) the name and titles of the person before whose statue they

stood ; so it will be seen that the obelisk was only a *tablet*, not a monument. As constructed in this country, they resemble a factory chimney so much, that intelligent people approaching Boston for the first time, are very much puzzled to distinguish between the numerous furnace-chimneys that stand round that city and the monument on Bunker Hill. The latest specimen of this style has been just built in this city, in honor of General Worth ; the iron bands usually put at intervals on the chimney, to prevent it from bursting, are on the monument used as tablets, to hold the names of all the battles at which the general was present.

The idea of the gothic steeple monument may be traced to the following source : In the thirteenth century, Eleanor, Queen of England, died, and her body was carried some distance to Westminster Abbey, and at the places where the bearers rested, the pious love of her husband caused to be erected small structures, in the form of a church spire surmounted by a cross, and containing in a niche a figure of the Virgin. These buildings were purely of a religious character, shrines of the Virgin, at which wayfarers might kneel and offer up their prayers for the repose of the soul of the good queen. If the shrines were intended to preserve her memory, their inadequacy to effect that object has been fully shown by time, as it is only through the researches of antiquaries that we have been made acquainted with their date, or that their erection was connected with any other name than that of the Virgin Mary. Before the Reformation they were called shrines of the Virgin, but since that event caused her statues to be removed, the buildings have been known only as crosses. Latterly, public attention having been attracted to their beauty, some wise head was inspired with the idea of erecting a building in the same style, as a monument to Sir Walter Scott. Accordingly, a steeple-form structure was put up ; the base is pierced by four arches, so that the superstructure stands on four buttressed columns, and in the centre is seen the statue of Sir Walter Scott. Now it may be asked, which, the statue, or the steeple, is the thing that is to remind us of Scott ? If a representation of his person cannot bring him fully to our minds, what assistance can memory receive from the steeple above his head ? Not the least ; so far from it, the more we contemplate the steeple, the less do our thoughts dwell on the statue, or the man to whom it was erected ; our attention is called to the size, beauty, and style of the architecture, and the statue, which should be the first, is made of secondary importance, and is obscured and overshadowed by the magnitude of the thing to which it is attached. The idea to be commemorated is the *man*, and anything that diverts our attention from that idea is worse than useless.

A circular temple, as a monument, is another misapplication, which has been suggested by the beautiful little ruin in Athens, called the choragic monument of Lysicrates. Lysicrates was a choragus, and his chorus having won a prize at a musical contest in the theatre, he dedicated the trophy

(a bronze tripod) to Apollo, and built the little temple as a pedestal, or altar, on which to stand the tripod ; thus, the building was a votive offering to a god, not a monument in honor of a man.

The column with a statue on top has apparently a precedent in the famous Roman pillar known as Trajan's ; but there hangs some doubt about the intention with which it was erected, for there is an inscription on its base which states that the pillar shows the height of the hill which once occupied the place, and had been removed to make way for the forum in which the column now stands, while on its top there once stood a statue of Trajan, and around the shaft there still is a basso-relievo of soldiers and captives, winding spirally up, putting one in mind of the bloody garter that every mediæval barber twisted round a pole, to indicate that the owner was a bloodletter. Taking the inscription and the sculptures together, the pillar commemorates either the elevation of the hill, or the victories of Trajan. Whichever way the case may be decided, there can be but one opinion among the unprejudiced, as to the absurdity of putting a statue so high that it cannot be seen distinctly, and the folly of spending enormous labor in cutting a bass-relief on a cylinder—the most inappropriate surface that stupidity could devise.

There is another idea borrowed from the Romans—that of mounting the figure of the person to be honored on the back of a horse. If the statue were that of a jockey, we could easily see the propriety of introducing the horse, but where the hero possesses any loftier attribute of humanity than good horsemanship, there can be no necessity of associating him with one of the brute creation. No one will assert that it is the most natural position of a man to be mounted in the saddle, or that he looks better there than when standing on his feet, or sitting in a chair. The horse is subject to the same objection that applies to all things that encumber the figure of the man—he attracts our attention from the hero. But, say the advocates of the equestrian statue, "it is the only proper mode of representing a general." There might be some truth in this, if only generals rode ; nor do generals always ride even in battle. Bonaparte stood on a platform at the battle of Waterloo, and at some other of his battles he lay down and went to sleep. Other generals have sat in a carriage on the battle-field. Besides, where the hero has shone in peace as brilliantly as in war, his peaceful character should be the one chosen to be commemorated, as that most beneficial to mankind. Again argue the equestrians, "Placing the man in the saddle elevates him above the eye, and *that* gives dignity." Of all the fallacies that pass current among artists there is not one more fanciful than that of giving dignity to a statue by elevating it into a position in which the original was never seen, and could not reach without mechanical assistance—that is, on horseback, on a high and narrow pedestal. Nor even without the horse, are great men ever seen in such situations, and if they were, elevation could confer no dignity, for that which we call dignity is

the outward expression of mental qualities, the possession of which excites our respect; for instance, if we find a man with intellect sufficient to attract the attention of the world, without being elated by it, always composed and calm, putting on no false appearance, never pretending to be more nor less than he is, never violating the rights of others, nor permitting his own to be outraged with impunity—we say to ourselves, “How I should like to be such a man;” this feeling we call *respect*, and the great qualities of the man, in their outward and visible manifestations, we call *dignity*. Now a statue ought to be a representation of the physical expression of mental qualities, and if these be such as command our respect, it follows that a statue having such expression possesses dignity, and the dignity being inherent in the statue, of course, cannot be *given to it* by any external circumstance, such as a lofty position. Elevation may obscure the beauties or defects, but can add no expression that the statue would not possess elsewhere. Put the “Dancing Faun” into any position you please, and the character continues the same, that of a dancing negro, essentially low; on the other hand, place the Apollo Belvedere wherever it can be seen, above or below the eye, and it still remains grand and beautiful; nothing can deprive it of its dignity. It must be added that its grace has a share in the impression made on us. Grace is the result of perfect construction and physical power, and is essential to the perfection of dignity. Any awkwardness, expression, or action in a statue that we would not like to witness in real life, must (as a general rule) be incompatible with dignity. Fancy a statue of Washington, in the attitude of a dancer, turning a piroette, or in a furious passion; would the feeling produced in us be respect, or could dignity be imparted to such a figure by an elevated position? We think not. To return to the equestrian statue: although we find it in Rome, it was undoubtedly the work of a Greek artist; but that does not make it Greek in taste; we find nothing like it in Greece. The artists of that country, when in Rome, worked to please the Romans, who (we should remember) were only soldiers; they produced no painters or sculptors of note; their writers never claimed for them any excellence in the fine arts; indeed, they seem to have looked with contempt on all those refinements which the Greeks regarded as the highest proofs of civilization. Cicero says: “To the conquered nations was “left the pursuit of the fine arts, while to the Romans was “reserved the government of men.” Again, speaking of works of art, he says: “It is astonishing how the Greeks “are delighted with those things which we despise.” It need scarcely be observed that such a people are not the guides that we should follow.

If we wish to cultivate our taste by learning how others have thought, let us look to those countries where the human mind was first developed, where the arts had their origin, and where they were carried to a perfection which we toil after in vain—to Egypt and to Greece. To the Egyptians we owe the invention of letters, and with picture

writing the fine arts had their birth. To carry the representation of the human form to perfection was reserved to the Greeks, but in all that affects the imagination through the sense of the sublime, the Egyptians have no peers; no people ever equalled them in the stupendous grandeur of their conceptions; they have left us monuments that can scarcely be imitated. A distinguished English architect, on returning from Egypt, said that in architecture no practical knowledge could be gained by going to Egypt, because the production of the *intensely sublime* would never again be required by man. Some writers have said that the pure taste of the Greeks rejected as barbarous the great size which the Egyptians adopted in their buildings and statues. This is a hasty conclusion. On examination, it will be found that it was want of means, and perhaps absence of a powerful priesthood, that caused the Greeks to build small temples and make small statues; whenever they had the power they erected large temples, as at Agrigentum and Ephesus. The same political jealousy which caused the banishment of great men, may have prevented their statues from being made larger than life; but when it was wished to affect the imagination, as in the images of the most important gods, they equalled the Egyptians; for instance, in the Pallas Athena, which was thirty-nine feet high, and the Athena Promachus, which was sixty feet, and the Zeus of Phidias was so large that the head nearly touched the roof of the temple in which the figure sat.

Those writers who decry the taste of the Egyptians should ask themselves, “What is the cause of the admiration which the world feels for St. Peter’s in Rome?” The answer would be, *its great size*, for there are other churches as beautiful, yet they are never mentioned. Travellers visit Niagara for its grandeur, and not for the character of its beauty; there are many falls that excel it in that respect, but none that have the vastness of Niagara—a sea of water thundering down a precipice. Vastness is one of the elements, perhaps the chief element of the sublime; therefore it is in vain that critics condemn its effect in sculpture. We have only to look into our own minds, and we shall find that God has implanted there the profoundest feeling of admiration for all that unites immensity and beauty. Although the statues which the Egyptians erected in honor of their kings and great men were deficient in natural truth and grace, they nevertheless possessed the character of sublimity in an eminent degree. The figures were mostly sitting, that position having more repose, and being less liable to damage and decay. The statues of the kings were generally of colossal dimensions, some of them fifty or sixty feet to the top of the head. By this great size they sought to convey to the mind of the beholder a measure of the heroic majesty of the person represented; in producing the desired impression, they must have been entirely successful, for of all the works of man there is nothing so sublime, nothing that excites so much awe, as a colossal statue; the spectator involuntarily says to himself, “This surely must have been one who occupied a great

station ; he was certainly a hero, or they would never have made his figure so stupendous."

In the plain of Thebes, there sit the ruins of two enormous statues; the names of those in whose honor they were there placed have been forgotten for thousands of years ; but still the statues speak a universal language, and say to every person who looks on them, "We were created to preserve from oblivion the memory of men whom the nation wished to honor." Now compare the remains of these sublime monuments with the shrines of the Virgin, built by King Edward ; *their* object was forgotten in a hundred years, while these statues, after a lapse of four or five thousand years, still tell a part of their story. Need any other evidence be produced to show the superiority of the statue, or the correctness of the theory which guided the Egyptians in designing their monuments—*the theory of picture writing*—which taught them that the only appropriate and always intelligible memorial of a hero, was his own image.

WHAT is whiling away time? When Watt sat in the chimney corner, observing the water force up the cover of the saucépan, he aroused the anger of his relations; but he was discovering the steam engine. . . .

The uncle of Pliny reproved him for walking, which he called losing time. How much truer was the confession of Warburton to his friend Hurd: "It would have been the greatest pleasure to have dropped upon you at Newark. I could have led you through delicious walks, and pricked off for your amusement in our rambles a thousand notions which I hung upon every thorn as I passed, thirty years ago." They whom the world calls idle, often do the most. In villages and by-lanes a few eyes are always learning. A garden, a wood, even a pool of water incloses a whole library of knowledge, waiting only to be read—precious types which Nature, in her great printing-press, never breaks up. And surely he is happy who is thus taught; for no man can afford to be really unemployed. The tree, it has been said, may lose its verdure; the sun need not count its rays; because the sap will strike out new foliage, and another night refills the treasury of day. But the thinking faculty does not suffer waste. The most saving and thrifty use of it will only make it sufficient for our absolute necessities.—*R. A. Willmott.*

Some poets, in their verses, have lamented the inroad which science will occasionally make in their favorite associations or predilections. A weak lament. Speaking largely, the more we know of nature, the more beautiful it becomes. Who has not felt that such knowledge as he had acquired of physiology and comparative anatomy (remote enough at first from aesthetics), had ended by throwing a fresh grace over every limb, a fresh charm over every movement in the animal creation? As to the vegetable world—as to our *trees*—I have not skill enough in language to describe the mystery and enchantment which modern sciences—whether of light, of chemistry, or of vital growth—have filled them with for me. Their leaves, as they rustle, seem to murmur of the half-told secrets of all creation. And take this with you: as science advances, each object, without losing its individuality, speaks more and more of *the whole*; and this—that each living thing gets some beauty from the harmony disclosed in its own structure.—*Thorndale.*

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS.*

If there were not ultimate unity in the diversity of men's pursuits and their natural tendencies, the world would become chaotic and a mass of confusion. Varied and erring as human judgments may be as to the utility or relative merits of these manifold pursuits and tendencies of men, yet there is a reasonable foundation for all of them, and a necessary place in the great advancing economy of the world. One man is driven by circumstances or some peculiarity of his nature, to transmute common cotton or wool into beautifully designed and enticingly colored fabrics. The multitude frequents his shop, eulogizes his articles, and buys them. A few years elapse, the manufacturer becomes rich, ascends the social scale, and draws a large circle of fashionable friends around him. Everybody regards him not only as a smart man, but one that has turned his time to great advantage, and got a name and a desirable place for himself in society. He is in fact a practical and useful man. Another member of the human family has taken to the reading of poetry from some peculiar twist in his nature. Gradually his soul poetically enlarges, and the fires of his imagination burn unremittingly. A poetical rainbow encircles everything that touches his senses, and his whole life is imaginatively drawn over ever blooming banks of wild-growing roses. But though this man's interior life is over-rich, the poverty of his exterior circumstances attract the pity, the commiseration, it may be the derision of the world. He is of no use to the shoemaker, the tailor, the hatter, the architect, and the upholsterer. He lives in a room and bedroom, his wife is wedded to calico, his children go to the poor school, and are familiar with rags. The world looks upon this man as out of his senses, rules him out of its consideration, and rich fathers and mothers hold him up as a warning to their sons, and as a scarecrow to their daughters. He dies unnoticed, if not despised, and a deal-board coffin accompanies him to his silent grave. Yet this man may bequeath to the world that has abused him a Shakspeare or a Bacon, the rich manufacturer an idiot or a vagabond as a compensation for their adoration. Thus it is that time sits in silent judgment upon the character, the mission, and the result of men's actions, and thus it is that our idols are cast down. Now, if we brought Saint Thomas of the thirteenth century, and John Jacob Astor of the nineteenth, before a modern tribunal, with a view of getting at a decision as to their relative merits as citizens of the world and as useful members of society, what would be the result? Doubtless, a very decided opinion that Astor's life was as useful as that of the saint's was useless. The one was a benighted scholastic of the middle ages, who discussed insoluble questions ; the other, a plain, practical man of the present enlightened age, who concerned himself only about lands, brick and mortar, and the accumulation of money. The

* *La Philosophie de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, par Charles Jourdain. Paris, 1858.